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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes data gathered by the National Center for Education Statistics on the number of special education degrees conferred from 1980-81 to 1985-86. This time period showed an uninterrupted decline in the combined number of bachelor's and master's degrees conferred. Most dramatic losses occurred in the areas of physical handicaps, mental retardation, and special learning disabilities. An increase in the number of graduates was reported in education of the gifted. The number of doctoral degrees in special education ranged from a high of 322 in 1981-82 to a low of 254 in 1984-85. A table, organized by 15 fields of study, provides annual data on the number of bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees conferred between 1980-81 and 1985-86. (JDD)

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The Decline in Special Education Degrees Conferred

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The Decline in Special Education Degrees Conferred

Each year, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) gathers data on the numbers of bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees conferred in various disciplines. An analysis of these data from 1980-81 to 1985-86 in the field of special education revealed the following. (Descriptors used to describe specialty areas were assigned by NCES.)

- o There was an uninterrupted decline of 35.5 percent in the combined number of bachelor's and master's degrees conferred in special education between 1980-81 and 1985-86.
- o There were 9,667 fewer bachelor's or master's degrees conferred in special education during 1985-86 than there were in 1980-81.
- o The number of bachelor's degrees has dropped by 5,578; the number of master's degrees by 4,089.
- o Dramatic losses have occurred in the number of degrees granted in the "education of the physically handicapped." In 1985-86, 59 percent fewer bachelor's and master's degrees were awarded in this area than in 1980-1981. The loss in bachelor's degrees was 64 percent; the loss in master's degrees was 50 percent.
- o The area of "education of the mentally retarded" experienced a similar dramatic decline of 56 percent. In 1985-86, 918 fewer bachelor's degrees in this area were reported and 61 percent fewer master's degrees were conferred.
- o Losses of nearly 50 percent were reported in the area of "special learning disabilities." Losses were constant over the period reviewed and were comparable at both the bachelor's and master's levels.
- o In the area of "visual impairment," there was a 67 percent decline in the number of bachelor's degrees conferred, but only a 35 percent decline in the number of master's degrees.
- o Other declines in bachelor's and master's degrees conferred were as follows: "special education/general" declined by 34 percent; "education of the deaf" by 36 percent; "speech correction" by 38 percent; "education of the emotionally disturbed" by 42 percent; "education of the multiply handicapped" by 33 percent.

- Increases in the number of graduates were reported in two specialty areas. "Education of the gifted" increased from 127 to 161 graduates (a 27 percent increase) between 1980-81 and 1985-86. "Special education/other" increased from 610 to 731 graduates (an increase of 20 percent) between 1982-83 and 1985-86. (This category was introduced into data collection in 1982-83, and data are not available for the years 1980-81 and 1981-82.)

- The number of doctoral degrees in special education conferred during the period under consideration ranged from a high of 322 in 1981-82 to a low of 254 in 1984-85.

- The average number of doctoral degrees conferred yearly during the period was 284.

- Most doctoral degrees in special education were reported in the area titled "special education/general."

- Between 1981-82 and 1985-86, no doctoral degrees were reported as conferred in "education of the multiply handicapped

- Six doctoral degrees in "education of the visually handicapped" were reported between 1980-81 and 1985-86. Twelve doctoral degrees were reported in "education of the deaf," 13 in "education of the gifted," 15 in "speech correction," 17 in "education of the physically handicapped," and 18 in "education of the emotionally disturbed. (In the latter area, emotional disturbance, only 7 degrees were conferred between 1982-83 and 1985-86.)

This information was extracted from data on degrees and other formal awards conferred as part of the Higher Education General Information Survey conducted annually by the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C.

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December 1988

Numbers of Graduates: #6

Summary of NCES Data on Degrees Conferred in Special Education (1980-81 - 1985-86)

Field of study	1980-81 B	M	D	1981-82 B	M	D	1982-83 B	M	D	1983-84 B	M	D	1984-85 B	M	D	1985-86 B	M	D	Increase/decrease 1980-81 - 1985-86	Per cent change 1980-81 - 1985-86
Special education general	8843	9482	207	8217	9157	253	7358	7958	213	6737	7390	203	5940	7070	199	5165	6894	201		
B & M subtotals	18325			17374			15316			14127			13010			12059				
Differences			-951			-2058			-11889			-1117			-951				-6266	-34%
Sp Ed Administration	20	37	18	0	44	19	0	67	20	0	64	21	0	71	19	3	24	51		
B & M subtotals	57			44			67			64			71			27				
Differences			-13			+23			-3			+7			-44				-30	-53%
Education of the mentally retarded	1660	463	4	1394	403	9	1190	306	8	1051	231	8	883	264	3	742	182	4		
B & M subtotals	2123			1797			1496			1282			1147			924				
Differences			-326			-301			-214			-135			-223				-1199	-56%
Education of the gifted	28	99	1	25	166	4	17	179	1	5	142	2	10	143	2	3	158	5		
B & M subtotals	127			191			196			147			153			161				
Differences			+64			+5			-49			+6			+8				+34	+27%
Education of the deaf	349	356	3	344	398	3	314	316	0	322	278	3	280	252	1	231	221	2		
B & M subtotals	705			742			630			600			532			452				
Differences			+37			-112			-30			-61			-80				-253	-36%

Field of study	1980-81 B	M	D	1981-82 B	M	D	1982-83 B	M	D	1983-84 B	M	D	1984-85 B	M	D	1985-86 B	M	D	Increase/decrease 1980-81 - 1985-86	Per cent change 1980-81 - 1985-86
Ed of the culturally disadvantaged	22	52	--	9	60	0	NA			0	3	0	17	38	0	30	8	0		
B & M subtotals		74			69						3			55			38			
Differences		-5								-66		+52		-17					-36	-49%
Education of the visually handicapped	93	114	1	64	146	1	45	92	3	41	60	0	27	81	1	31	74	0		
B & M subtotals		207			210			137			101			108			105			
Differences		+3			-73					-36		+7		-3					-102	-49%
Speech Correction	1197	495	5	1120	443	1	990	403	4	872	383	1	775	747	3	753	299	1		
B & M subtotals		1692			1563			1393			1255			1522			1052			
Differences		-129			-170					-138		+267		-470					-640	-38%
Education of the emotionally disturbed	471	411	5	425	353	6	419	311	8	305	262	3	306	325	2	280	228	2		
B & M subtotals		882			778			730			557			631			508			
Differences		-104			-48					-173		+74		-123					-374	-42%
Remedial education	17	190	3	52	82	0	43	64	6	3	210	1	0	47	0	0	26	1		
B & M subtotals		207			134			107			213			47			26			
Differences		-73			-27					+106		-166		-21					-181	-87%

Field of study	1980-81 B	M	D	1981-82 B	M	D	1982-83 B	M	D	1983-84 B	M	D	1984-85 B	M	D	1985-86 B	M	D	Increase/decrease 1980-81 - 1985-86	Per cent change 1980-81 - 1985-86
Special learning disabilities	846	1507	27	792	1573	22	476	1145	14	490	1140	11	433	908	18	427	785	21		
B & M subtotals	2353			2365			1621			1630			1341			1212				
Differences		+12			-744			+9			-289			-129					-1141	-48%
Education of the physically handicapped	137	90	3	122	78	4	90	83	4	71	91	3	53	96	2	49	45	1		
B & M subtotals	227			200			173			162			149			94				
Differences		-27			-27			-11			-13			-55					-133	-59%
Education of the multiple handicapped	104	128	5	54	142	0	102	208	0	46	144	0	28	125	0	58	97	0		
B & M subtotals	232			196			310			190			153			155				
Differences		-36			+114			-120			-37			+2					-77	-33%
Special education, other	NA			NA			374	236	10	358	213	4	382	230	4	437	294	9		
B & M subtotals							610			571			612			731				
Differences								-39			+41			+119					+121	+20%
Totals	13787	13424	282	12618	13045	322	11418	11368	291	10301	10611	260	9134	10397	254	8209	9335	296		
B & M subtotals	27211			25663			22786			20912			19531			17544				
Differences		-1548			-2877			-1874			-1381			-1987					-9667	-35.5%

Information for this table was extracted from data on degrees and other formal awards conferred as part of the Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS) conducted annually by the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C.